

*In the same charism  
with responsibility*



**n. 2 - 2024**

**COMPANY OF SAINT URSULA  
SECULAR INSTITUTE OF SAINT ANGELA MERICI  
FEDERATION**

**[www.istitutosecolareangelamerici.org](http://www.istitutosecolareangelamerici.org)**

**[www.angelamerici.it](http://www.angelamerici.it)**

**[email: fed.comp\\_2016@libero.it](mailto:fed.comp_2016@libero.it)**



## CONTENTS

To the Readers	p. 4
Toward the Assembly of the Federation	p. 6
Authority That Serves	p. 9
Worldwide: Italian Culture	p. 12
Angela Merici's Journey of the Heart	p. 19
Consecrated Men and Women Journeying to the Jubilee	p. 24
Presentation of <i>Il santuario di S. Angela Merici</i>	p. 34
With Jesus in Prayer	p. 40

### FROM THE COMPANIES AND GROUPS

Company of Toronto	p. 45
Company of Brazil Southeast	p. 45
Company of Torino	p. 48
A Sister in Bangladesh	p. 49
Modena: A Well for Life	p. 51
Ragusa: Transferring the Company's House	p. 53
Company of Indonesia	p. 54
United together, all of one heart and one will	p. 55
With Saint Angela on the Roads of Hope	p. 56

## TO THE READERS

### With Saint Angela on the Roads of Hope

*Be happy and have lively faith and hope* (Ninth Counsel 26)



We are almost there – this is the last issue of the newsletter before the Federation Assembly.

In the Federation Council we were wondering about the title for our Federation Assembly. We wish to experience this Merician Assembly in tune with the world in which we are consecrated and in the Church walking in the world. We want to be on the journey toward Jubilee 2025 with our charism.

If the Church and the world are in need of hope... if pilgrims establish paths to a destination... St. Angela speaks of **roads**, of **paths** that bring hope and lead along an earthly itinerary to the Homeland of Heaven.

Thus the Federation, which unites groups and companies from all over the world, will celebrate its Assembly with joy and lively hope.

It will review roads and paths already traveled, read the present and commit itself to a future of hope for each sister and for the whole Institute.

### With Saint Angela...

The Assembly will review the life of the Federation and propose future plans. And St. Angela has promised her presence: ***I am continually among them with my Lover, rather, the Lover of us all, as long as they believe and do not lose hope*** (Fifth Counsel 32, 38-39).

St. Angela is with us, with the *Lover of us all*, and we do not want to *lose hope* on the streets and roads of our world; let us look on high and put *our hope up there*.

### On the Roads of Hope...

The assembly, on the threshold of the jubilee, aims to renew the pilgrimage of hope. The world's roads are often hopeless; its paths do

not always lead to the goal, but *we seek and want to follow those ways and means that are necessary to persevere and progress* today and to the end: *seek out, and desire all those means and ways that are necessary to persevere and prosper till the end.*

St. Angela commits us to the necessary means and ways and requires us to embrace them, to follow them, to observe them. But she gives us great positivity in our paths, promises us *flower-strewn roads ... , paved with finest gold: Embrace the means and ways necessary ... Follow the ways and the rules necessary.... Observe this Rule ... as the road to walk by...*. *Keep to the ancient way and custom of the Church.... And live a new life* (7<sup>th</sup> Counsel 22).

But there is only one way that leads to the goal; it is *Jesus Christ, the only way to heaven...* (Rule, Ch. 4, 4). This is the sure path to take at this turning point in history, in the Assembly of our Institute.

**There is a Merician style of walking on the roads of hope:** it is the style that St. Angela bequeathed to us before she left us on the earthly roads toward the way to heaven: the style of joy, happiness, gladness... *Now I leave you... be consoled, do not doubt...* (Last Legacy 17). *Persevere faithfully and joyfully...* (Last Legacy 22). *Be happy, and always full of charity and faith and hope in God* (Rule, Ch. 9, 11).

**It is the style of faith and hope:** ... *and have a lively faith and hope* (9<sup>th</sup> Counsel 26). *They must not lose hope.... Let them set their hopes on high and not on earth* (5<sup>th</sup> Counsel 32, 42).

*My Lord, my only life and hope...* (Rule, Ch. 5, 35).

In the Assembly of the Federation in 2024, walking along these roads,

*thorny and rocky, we will find them flower-strewn for us, paved with finest gold...*

(cf. Rule, Prologue)



Kate

**Have a good preparation and a good celebration  
of our Federation's Assembly!**

## *Toward the Assembly of the Federation 2024*

### Christ Our Hope Is Risen!

**Valeria Broll**  
**President of the Federation**



This is the proclamation of Easter and this is the Easter time we are living, not only liturgically, but concretely, despite the global, local and social-political situations that flounder or attempt to raise their heads, making arrogant choices for power that are disproportionate in responding to real social and human problems.

We, flood the time we are asked to live with Hope, because we know where Hope dwells, in God: *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in faith, that you may abound in hope by virtue of the Holy Spirit* (Romans 15:13). *"Hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us"* (Romans 5:5); and we know to whom we have given our hearts: to Him who died and rose again for our Salvation.

St. Angela, whom we find represented as a Pilgrim in this icon, tells us the right attitude to take in order to set out and set out again; but to go where, to reach what and whom?

Let us open and read her writings and we will find the goal of our journey and we will find the step to take to reach it. A little taste: *Let them put their hope and love in God alone. Let them set their hope on high. Act, move, believe, strive, hope, cry out to Him with your heart.*

Let us return to the icon, and observe the **gaze**.

She is aiming forward and upward, because her faith is certain, for, as St. Paul writes to Timothy: *For I know in whom I have put my trust, and I have no doubt at all that He is able to safeguard until that Day what I have entrusted to him* (2 Timothy). In this Word lies the strength to know how to always resume the journey with others, toward

others, how to offer and share the joy of being loved, saved and sent. Without any fear. Without any boasting.

The journey is known to be tiring, and one needs support. What is meant by that stick that makes it possible to move forward? The Word of God, the Company, being united together, *"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want; [...]He refreshes me, he guides me in the right path, for his name's sake. If I should walk through a dark valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me. **Your rod** and your staff give me courage"* (Psalm 23).

**The Staff:** useful on the way but also useful for driving away and chasing away anything that hinders the way: *I beg you with all my heart, please be watchful and most vigilant, like so many caring shepherdesses, for this heavenly flock entrusted to your hands, that no weeds of discord or other scandal grow up among them, and especially that they not sully themselves with any poisonous and heretical opinion in these pestilential times. And consider that the devil never sleeps, but in a thousand ways seeks our ruin. Be on guard, then* (10<sup>th</sup> Legacy). *Know that you have to defend and protect your lambs from wolves and robbers, that is, from two kinds of pestilential people: worldly persons or false religious with their deceits, and heretics* (7<sup>th</sup> Counsel).

There is also a **breeze** that caresses and envelops everything in this image. It all points to the Spirit guiding, illuminating, directing, and motivating the journey: *May the strength and true consolation of the Holy Spirit be in you all, so that you can sustain and carry out vigorously and faithfully the charge laid upon you.... How much, therefore must you pray God to enlighten you, and direct you, and teach you what you have to do for love of him in this task* (Prologue to the Counsels). *Jesus Christ will be in your midst, and as a true and good master, he will enlighten and teach you what you have to do* (Last Legacy).

**On the way**, then, with St. Angela toward the ordinary Assembly of the Federation called to elect a new council, then called in turn: *to foster growth in sisterly communion among the Companies... enhance the exchange of experiences; promote conventions... care for the publication of materials for common use; maintain relations with the Holy See* (Constitutions 30.2).

But this is not the path of a few, of some among us, but it is the path of all of us, united together, because we are all called to contribute to the achievement of these goals, with prayer and charity that becomes closeness, support and collaboration.

With an intense faith and a living hope, Saint Angela started the Company to offer each one of us a place where we can experience and grow in Love, where each one can feel guarded, loved, supported and respected in her uniqueness. In founding the Company, *Saint Angela offers and proposes a model based on the appreciation of humanity and the experience of the self. In fact, the organization of the Company is based on people's gifts and characteristics, on love and friendship, rather than on hierarchies and obedience to a given model* (Fr. Rino La Delfa).

This belonging to the Lord in the Company enables us to face every experience and journey in life (work, leisure, relationships, loneliness, labors, joys) with a strong spiritual and human maturity. How do we achieve this high spiritual and human stature? "By looking up and forward, with the Word of God in your heart and love for your brothers and sisters in your hands. *You are consecrated for the world, which awaits your witness to access a freedom that gives joy, that nourishes hope, that prepares the future*" (Pope Francis to CMIS).

If we strive to *live as is required of the true spouses of the Most High, and observe the Rule as the path along which to walk*, St. Angela has *an undoubted and firm faith, and hope in the infinite divine goodness, that we will not only easily overcome all dangers and adversities, but will also overcome them with great glory and joy* (Prologue to the Rule).

Let us rise up and together with St. Angela, pilgrim of Hope, let us travel the roads of the world with joy, with faith and with hope.

Nothing and no one can stand in our way, for Christ our Hope is risen.

Valeria Broll





## Authority That Serves

### Bishop Adriano Tessarollo, Ecclesiastical Assistant to the Council of the Federation



The idea of writing these lines came to me when thinking about the Assembly of election that the Company of St. Ursula, Secular Institute of St. Angela Merici, is preparing to hold in the coming summer. The Assembly will also involve the journey that the Italian Companies are making in order to give adequate guidance and accompaniment to the Italian Companies as a whole. This movement emerges not only because many of them find themselves reduced to just a few members, usually of a very advanced age and perhaps already resigned to waiting for the end of their Companies. Above all the intention is the hope that the Merician charism may still find a welcome in Italy and, through the experience of a revitalized single Company, may flourish again.

Every human and ecclesial association needs people to take care of the life of the institute: its needs for formation, accompaniment of the members and management of any shared places and properties, that is, the service of authority. In the Church, the term “authority” has never officially gone out of use, although in recent decades there may have been a critical attitude toward it, a fear that it might diminish personal autonomy.



In the experience of Italian Companies, the concern to safeguard their legally recognized autonomy risks depriving the many Companies of a vital and adequate service of authority.

Despite the reaffirmations of the role of authority in its concrete expressions in various groups in the Catholic Church, actual practice seems to go in short order. This fact leaves those who bear the burden of guiding these groups (many small Companies) alone. Therefore those in authority cannot offer aids and guidelines to foster the lives of members in Church-related groups such as the Company.

Thus, there is a risk that the **authority that serves** is lacking: not the authority that limits, controls, forbids, disciplines, censors, and imposes, but the authority that opens, orients, encourages, gathers and makes possible a life project which one has joined.



Centuries-long Christian history is the development of what has sprung from the one authority of Jesus, in fidelity to his Spirit, authenticated by the several authorities who in the Church have always had the task of opening paths, not closing doors, pointing to



horizons, tracing paths, enabling new things, inventing forms, daring prophecies, supporting labors, proposing new directions and possible choices that new situations required and sometimes imposed, and finally ensuring the human and spiritual care of people; in short, an **authority that serves**!

Certainly one is the spirituality of the Company in the Church (founded on Baptism, nourished by the Word of God and by the holy sacraments) lived in the particular way proposed by the Merician charism.

It is a charism that has taken historical forms from the spiritual experiences proper to each individual Company and the journey of all the Companies, unified in the Federation and incarnated in the situations proper to each Company and each individual consecrated woman. Indeed, it is the concrete situation that shapes the spiritual life and forges the holiness of each in the Church and in the Company.

When one **assumes the service of authority**, one should do so as a response to Jesus' question to Peter, "Do you love me? Shepherd my sheep." St. Angela also reminds those who exercise some responsibility in the Company that she sends them to be "shepherds," to care for the sisters, knowing also how to discern where the Lord is leading them to follow him.

The service of authority should therefore be taken up with confidence, with a heart full of hope, looking boldly and confidently into the future. Of course, every service also entails a burden and sometimes even arouses a sense of helplessness in the face of new situations and the real difficulties and labors that service requires. But, in the face of the difficulties, labors and fears that accompany the service of authority, it must be kept in mind that he who calls and sends is not weak!

**So I wish good work to the new upcoming Council of the Federation and its President. And I also wish that the journey of the Italian Companies towards a new Company can be a true help for all consecrated women who live and will live the Merician charism in Italy and that this new reality receives a good welcome.**

A personal note: My service is drawing to a close, a service that I have given for so many years in the Federation Council and in the different Companies that I have been able to meet. I have received much in motivation, good example, sisterly friendships and mutual prayers.

For all this I thank and wish each and every one all good and blessing from the Lord.

+Adriano Tessarollo

**Thank you, dear Assistant  
Don Adriano!**

# WORLDWIDE IDENTITY: GETTING TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER'S CULTURES

## Glimpses of “Italian Culture”- continued

w  
o  
r  
l  
d  
w  
i  
d  
e.  
..

### The Church in Italy

Undoubtedly the presence of the Pope and the Holy See in Italy has contributed to a greater closeness of people to the Catholic faith than in other European countries. Until the 1980s it could be said that the Catholic Church and its parishes were the reference point for most Italians, and society could call itself Christian. Today the situation has changed a lot and parishes are declining and in difficulty, but they still remain important points of transmission of faith and charity. Regarding this we cannot fail to mention the many Christian voluntary associations.

Moreover, the presence of so many ecclesial movements has become an important feature of these decades and for many Christians a reference point other than the parish.

There are many shrines in our country, true centers of spirituality at the service of Italy and the world.

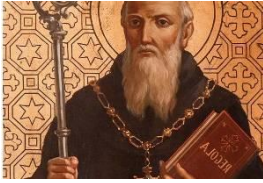


### Saints in Italy

The Gospel preached by St. Paul and St. Peter from the first years after Jesus' death and resurrection has borne its good and abundant fruits in our country that have left a profound imprint not only in matters strictly related to the Church and faith, but also in the history of thought, the evolution of society and political, economic and human affairs. Many holy men and women have been astonishing for their moral stature and spiritual strength and for the impact of their commitments and actions in Italy and around the world.

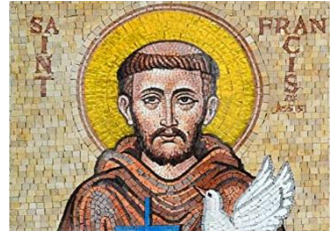
Not only important individual saints, but also religious movements and orders have shaped culture and society, influenced

politics, and directed history. We recall a few of them, but their number is truly great!



**St. Benedict of Nursia** (480-547), with his Rule, was the founder of the Benedictine Order and considered the father of Western monasticism. Throughout Europe the foundation of numerous monasteries created centers of spirituality, culture, and human and social promotion, including countless works of irrigation, land reclamation and cultivation. In these ways Benedictine monks contributed significantly to the development of entire territories. St. Benedict is the patron saint of Europe.

**St. Francis of Assisi** (1181 or 1182-1226). His love for Jesus and the Church led him to renounce everything, dedicating his life to prayer, work, and preaching. He lived in poverty yearning for the whole Church to return to the same life.



His message of love, fraternity and respect for creation has come down to us with surprising intensity and vividness. He is the patron saint of Italy.

**St. Clare of Assisi** (1193-1253) was a disciple of St. Francis and was among the first women to write a Rule for her followers. Centuries later St. Angela Merici would also dictate a Rule for her daughters and sisters.



**Saint Catherine of Siena** (1347-1380) was a Dominican tertiary, theologian and mystic who devoted her existence to the service



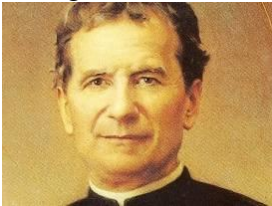
of the poor and to the work of wisdom.

Always attentive to what was happening around her and to the historical events that shook the world, she maintained an intense correspondence with the Pope and other powerful people of her time.



Her letters of comfort, advice and exhortation exerted an incredible effect on many events and controversies. She was the first woman to be proclaimed a Doctor of the Church; she is also co-patroness of Europe and of Italy.

**St. Camillus De Lellis** (1550-1614), who dedicated his life to caring for the sick; **St. John Bosco** (1815-1888), a religious and educator of young people, especially the most disadvantaged; **St. Daniel Comboni** (1831-1881), a great missionary whose innovative project was to "save Africa with Africa."



**Company of St. Ursula, Born in Italy...**  
... Founded by Angela Merici in Brescia on November 25, 1535

Italy not only gave birth to St. Angela Merici (1474-1540) but was the cradle of the Company, the Holy Land of our Institute because so many women have had the courage to follow in their mother's footsteps and carry on her charism for centuries with so much faith, in silence and hiddenness, facing difficulties and misunderstandings even in the Church.

St. Angela was a woman inserted in her time who allowed herself to be shaped by the faith and the culture of Italy between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries and to be challenged by the social situation of her time. She breathed the influence of humanism and Devotio Moderna in which the vision of the state of 'perfection' had been affirmed since the 1400s, not as something acquired once and for all, but as a journey with the Gospel through the Rule, emphasizing the interiority of the [evangelical] commitments and oriented to the origins of Christianity.

By introducing into the Company the "firm purpose/firm commitment," that is, the firm intention [*proposito fermo*] to commit

oneself to living the evangelical counsels without making vows, St. Angela detaches herself from the medieval idea that a vow was something more (in living a path of consecration) than commitment in the world. This perspective refers back to the essentiality of the early Church, whose members lived in their own homes, carried out their own work, and mingled among the people without distinguishing, external signs.

The Company was also ahead of its time in pointing out the dignity of women to the Church and society of the time. Some features of her foundation highlight this in a very strong way: lay and female governance manifests St. Angela's confidence in women's ability to discern, to judge, to govern themselves and to freely choose what to do with their lives (see Alberto Margoni's *Angela Merici: The Intuition of Secular Spirituality*, ed. Rubettino p. 55). Her support for her daughters' right to receive the dowry, that is, their inheritance, highlights the dignity of this choice as a third way on a par with marriage and religious life. At the same time, trust in women as capable of managing their own property emerges.



In the Rule, Angela urges obedience above all to the counsels of the Holy Spirit, who speaks to each one. In the Testament she stresses the importance of respecting each daughter's free will and of not wanting to have anything done by force. With these statements she anticipates by centuries what now seems established to us, but which is still not in other cultures and parts of the world.

After the death of St. Angela (1540) numerous new Companies flourished in Italy and this continued until the Napoleonic period (1796-1815), when many of them were suppressed. But many daughters remained faithful to the original Merician charism and continued to live it in a hidden way, not only as a personal consecration but also in association with others.

After this very difficult period, not only for the Company but for the whole Church, a wonderful recovery took place that also saw a new

flowering of Companies in Italy. In this phase the sisters Maddalena and Elisabetta Girelli of Brescia had the very important and estimable role of reconstituting the Company by adopting the Rule then recognized by the Brescian church as 'original.' They also obtained its due canonical recognition. The Girelli sisters also greatly promoted the knowledge of St. Angela's charism, an initiative which favored its propagation in Italy and in the nearest European countries. This effort to spread the charism was also carried on later by Giulia Vismara of Milan and Marianna Amico Roxas of Caltanissetta, who were great instruments for the birth of new Companies.

In the first decades of the 1900s there arose among the Companies (then mainly Italian) a desire for communion, collaboration and conversation. In 1947 the official approval of Secular Institutes prompted the Companies to question themselves about the charism and to recognize themselves in the fundamental characteristics of this new form of consecrated life. They saw our foundress as a prophetic forerunner of the times and the Company of St. Ursula as the forerunner of this vocation. This path would lead to the birth of the Federation and its recognition as the Secular Institute of Saint Angela Merici of pontifical right with diocesan or interdiocesan organization (May 25, 1958).

For us in Italy today, the choice of secular consecration after the Second Vatican Council harmonizes with the awareness of the importance of the role of the laity in the Church and with the values of self-determination and autonomy that women's lives generally enjoy, facilitated by a good level of education and well-being. Our charism, like the Gospel, has the potential to penetrate and be lived in every environment. However, relativism about values and the importance of appearance and image in our no-longer-Christian society make it difficult to transmit the charism.

In the ecclesial sphere, undoubtedly there has been progress in knowledge and appreciation for forms of consecration other than religious life. But there is still much to be done for a full recognition that goes to the heart of this life and vocation, that is, to being and not to doing. Participation with other secular institutes in the national CIIS (Italian Conference of Secular Institutes) and diocesan CIS



(coordinating secular institutes) has been and continues to be an important opportunity to create knowledge and collaboration in the Church.

Our Companies, like Italian society, have a high average age, but also by new vocations that give us joy and hope. The older sisters offer us the witness of great fidelity to the charism and also to the youthfulness of the Spirit, which is always finding new ways to express espousal and maternity. The younger sisters are enthusiastic and eager to learn more and more about the charism and to progress in living it. They have a good level of cultural preparation and are skilled in the use of media.

The modest number of vocations is a characteristic of the entire Italian Church and beyond, resulting from the decrease in the young population and especially the low number of actual believers in the young-adult age groups.

Modern means of communication facilitate our relationships, but they do not replace the richness of in-person encounter, which remains an essential point of reference for the life of our Companies. The shifts and work commitments of those of working age sometimes constitute new difficulties for organizing our meetings.

Fidelity to the annual spiritual exercises and sharing this opportunity is a fruitful, mutually enriching experience that has been taking place for years among some of our Italian Companies and also with other Secular Institutes.

Conferences organized by the Federation offer us important opportunities for deepening and meeting, bringing together groups and Companies from all over the world. So do the meetings for leaders and for sisters on the path of initial formation. The rich content of the magazine *In the same charism with responsibility* helps us in personal deepening, introduces Companies to each other, and often offers us suitable material for formation.

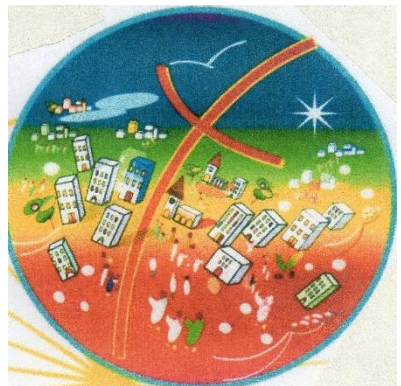
Some Companies, in recent years, have had the experience of joining with other neighbors or welcoming them through fusion (as encouraged in Article 35.3 of our Constitutions) and through sharing resources and energies; these experiences have helped us to live in a new way the “united together” that characterizes our charism.

Many Companies still have their own houses and large structures that testify to a past different from the present, committed to services in education and hospitality. Today these realities often weigh down the life of our Companies, requiring much energy, wisdom and the ability to discern together, that is, with synodality, in order to deal with the many difficulties that arise in the management or alienation of assets and to ensure that they are transformed into new opportunities.

Moreover, since the establishment of the Federation, many sisters have worked in its Council and others have collaborated with it for the whole Institute, which, as the years have passed, has taken on an increasingly worldwide character. In fact, that seed planted by the hand of God, through Saint Angela, has now touched all the continents.

What will be the Company's presence in Italy in the future? The signs of the times are not very encouraging, but the Company has already gone through difficult times. St. Angela promises us that we shall "*see wondrous things*," and we want to believe this as we contemplate the spread of the Company in the different continents where the seed of our charism has arrived by very different ways and often as the fruit of the fertility of the Italian Companies.

*Claudia and sisters of the Company of Padua*



***And now, please be attentive,  
with great and longing hearts... (Rule, Prologue 32)***

## Angela Merici's Journey of the Heart Truth and Spirit – Holy Obedience

A  
n  
ge  
la  
  
M  
er  
ici  
's  
  
Jo  
ur  
ne  
y  
of  
  
th  
e  
  
H  
ea  
rt

We are continuing the articles drawn from *Angela Merici's Journey of the Heart: The Rule, the Way* by Mary-Cabrini Durkin, published in English in 2005.

### Honesty and Healing: Chapter VII on Confession

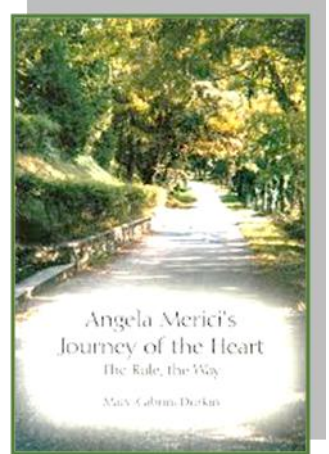
Discernment is essential to obedience, and Confession can be a tool of discernment. That is one reason why Angela includes Chapter VII, "About Confession," in the Rule, since the sacrament offers a source of spiritual guidance and inner honesty.

Confession involves much more, though. More deeply, Angela sees Confession as *a necessary medicine for the wounds of our souls* (Ch. VII:1).

The wounds are our own sinfulness and others' offenses that have damaged or infected us. *In truth of conscience* we face and name our sins (Ch. VII:9). Let us be *totally sincere* (Ch. VII:9)! Let us take responsibility for our actions—exterior and interior. We face the confessor with our truth. Let us *ask forgiveness* in complete trust (Ch. VII:10). God's love for us was poured out on the cross. God's forgiveness is ours before we ask. Asking is our human act of reaching out for it, opening our hands and hearts to receive.

This *medicine* of Confession heals in a lifelong process. Our sinfulness and weaknesses persist in us, like the weeds among the wheat in the Gospel parable. The divine Farmer lets both exist side by side till the harvest. Tearing out the weeds could damage the wheat.

Confession contributes to discernment and obedience because within its process our own inner work and God's grace



combine to *purify] and clean our conscience*. In direct proportion to that cleansing process, Angela explains, we are able to hear the Holy Spirit, *whose voice we will hear all the more clearly the more purified and clean our conscience* (Ch. VIII:15). This is the crucial requirement for holy obedience: honest effort and openness to grace, that our hearing may be clear of distortion.

### Spirit-based Obedience

The Holy Spirit *teaches us every truth* (cf. John 16:13; Ch. VIII:16). We gradually learn to live by the truth. For Angela, truth is not an abstraction. She often uses *Truth* as her name for Jesus (e.g., Ch. VIII:8). His example, his Gospel—that is what the Spirit teaches us. If we act by the Gospel, we will be doing God’s will. We learn to distinguish this voice of truth from false voices. It lights up our shadows. We grow from false obedience into *holy obedience*.

The Holy Spirit is the central principle in our obedience, guiding our response to God’s call, guiding our prayer and actions, guiding the plans and decisions of the whole Company and of its leaders. The Spirit is the foundation of the mutual trust on which Angela constructed her Company. She provides in the Rule no mechanism of enforcement, no way to control the members. The Company depends completely on each individual’s conscientious commitment. It exemplifies the charismatic moment of pre-Reformation Church renewal, in which lay Catholics turned to the Holy Spirit to restore and guarantee religious authenticity.

The Testament, probably composed a little later than the Rule, demonstrates an evolution based on practical experience. In her final words to the matrons leading the Company, Angela suggests ways of coping with the fact that some early Ursulines were not being consistent in their observance. Faced with inconstancies, Angela reminds the leaders *not to want to get anything done by force, because God has given free will to everyone, and wants to force no one* (Third Legacy:8-10). She considers the possibility that *reproaches and severity* may *occasionally* be *necessary* (Third Legacy:13). Even *reproaches* can exist in the dynamics of a respectful and trusting relationship, when one is willing to use painful honesty, but not force.

It was risky for Angela to leave so much to individuals. Not everyone is at the same point of spiritual maturity or understands things the same way. That risk is the price of our freedom of conscience. She may have realized that the day would come when her daughters would take different views on the decisions before them. She prayed that such differences might not rupture their unity. Yet it did.

If we weighed in Angela's scales the outer voices and the voice of conscience, conscience would be the weightier. A priority is established. The inner *counsels of the Holy Spirit are above all* (Ch. VIII:14). In *the heart* the sorting and sifting of discernment takes place. Each person must be responsible before God for her own deeds. Yet our conscience is not infallible. It depends on our open-hearted listening and on God's grace. At times we may even recognize that our confusion requires us to trust another person's judgment. A constant challenge!

Angela's prayer expressed in Chapter V acknowledges sinfulness in her own dark places, what today would be called her "shadow." This truth kept her humble. Humility may be the surest "hearing aid" for receiving the Holy Spirit's guidance.

Angela's way of obedience was far indeed from the norms of her world, where fathers and husbands and clerics usually made decisions for women—presumably weak-minded and morally inferior. Experience had shown Angela that the Holy Spirit speaks in a woman's heart as clearly as in a man's. The Company reflected that fact. No men held authority in the Company, and none held authority over it. The male *governors* acted on behalf of members and guided them in business negotiations and represented them in law courts, where women could not go. But they did not govern the members' lives. Nor were clerics involved.

### Obeying God

Chapter VIII concludes with a sweeping statement: *obey God and each creature for love of God, as the Apostle says* (Ch. VIII:17). She paraphrases the *Apostle* Peter, teaching his community of disciples to "Be subject to every human institution for the Lord's sake..." (1 Peter 2:13). Peter continues, "Be free, yet without using freedom as a pretext for evil.... Give honor to all, love the community, fear God, honor the

king” (1 Peter 2:16, 17). In other words, combine spiritual freedom with communal responsibility and relationships.

How can we obey *each creature*? Angela experienced God as the innermost reality of every being, reaching out to us and speaking to us from within all of creation. That is true for the natural world as well as for human beings (who are really an organic part of nature). Loving God means respecting how God works in everything and treating it accordingly—the land, the animals, everything, everyone. Angela expresses the need to listen to and obey human beings. We also obey God when we listen to other creatures and allow what we hear to guide our actions. God is in them, too.

It is all about God. The challenge of this chapter is to be so adept at listening that we can hear God’s word in anything and anyone, so honest that the self is freed of self-deceit, narrow limits and compulsions, and so discerning that we hear the Holy Spirit’s voice clearly in our hearts.

The last line in Chapter VIII states Angela’s final criterion for discernment. She says to obey...*as long as nothing is commanded against the honor of God and of one’s own integrity* (Ch. VIII:18). One’s *honestate* is one’s truth. The Italian words show that *honestate* is linked with *honor*. Truth. Dignity. God’s. Ours.

### One’s Own...God’s

Finally the question raised at the beginning of this chapter is answered. Finally indeed! The last words of Chapter VIII express the last criterion for discerning *holy obedience: one’s own integrity: propria honestate*. “Own”: that word from line 2, the word to watch for. At the beginning of Chapter VIII, Angela says that *one’s own will...is within us like murky hell* (Ch. VIII:2). At the chapter’s end, *one’s own* is a blessing.

Throughout Chapter VIII, she has been expanding this word, opening it up to fuller meaning. If we open our ears to listen and our hearts to act with love, our *own* expands. It is no longer so small as the self. We no longer think and act only in terms of our narrow self. We locate ourselves in community. We grow into God. The self is filled with God.

Filled with God! As we enter more and more deeply into God and into the truth of our own being, we find the point of union. God's Being, filling each of us and all creation, loves us into existence in our uniqueness. Yes, even with our flaws. When we experience ourselves and God this way, we eagerly search out how to live this union in the concrete actions of our daily lives. This is our deepest, truest integrity.

Despite all that has been said about listening, it is not enough. **We must act.** *Obey.* Listen for the truth of God that each creature reveals, listen to the voice of the Spirit, and act on what you hear. Angela locates the Spirit's counsels in the heart. A person as passionate as she knows the energy for action that emerges from the heart.

We listen. We follow the example of Jesus. Angela repeatedly stresses the importance of acting in response to God's gracious self-revelation, God's invitation to *a new and wondrous dignity* (Pr.:8). The Prologue frames our actions in loving gratitude. This is *holy obedience*.

## Reflection

- Have you ever found a conflict between external and internal voices?
- How does the situation of women around you compare with that of Brescia's women in Angela's day?
- For Angela, freedom is foundational to obedience. What aids your growth in authentic freedom?
- Does Angela's idea of *holy obedience* challenge you to listen more earnestly?
- Does Angela challenge you to move away from mere compliance in any particular situation?
- Consider the environmental implications of Angela's summary, "*obey God and each creature for love of God.*"

Mary-Cabrini Durkin – Company of Canada



## Consecrated Men and Women Journeying to the Jubilee

Consecrated life, responding to Pope Francis' call to create, through the Jubilee journey, a climate of hope and trust as a sign of rebirth for



which all humanity feels the need, wants to reflect on the great need for peace, an urgency of our time.

As we continue to walk toward the Jubilee of Consecrated Life, scheduled to

take place in Rome October 8-9, 2025... the Dicastery for Consecrated Life planned for consecrated persons a proposal that would combine the word *hope* with the word *peace*, in a world thirsting for peace and reconciliation.

Meanwhile, on the path of preparation for Jubilee 2025, about 300 consecrated men and women gathered in Rome Feb. 1-4, 2024, for a meeting organized according to the synodal style. *"A new style to prepare a very profound moment for the Church which is the Jubilee, which brings us close to the experience of God,"* said Cardinal João Braz de Aviz, Prefect of the Dicastery, in an interview by Bianca Fraccalvieri for Vatican News. *"We are and we want to be a gift for the Church, we have to breathe and live with the Church and so we want to start right away, then we will have other in-depth meetings."*

Thus, consecrated men and women from more than 60 countries met in Rome: one religious, one member of a secular institute and one consecrated woman belonging to the Ordo Virginum from each country. A new stage in the journey toward the Jubilee of 2025, to share experiences of life and mission, with the desire to return to their own countries with the mandate to continue to be a sign of reconciliation among peoples.



In Rome, for this Jubilee stage, three sisters from our Institute were invited by their local bishops to represent secular institutes: **Monica from Australia, Perpetua from Kenya and Voahangy from Madagascar.**

It was a great gift and joy for them, for us and for the Federation. This presence of theirs in Rome speaks of the esteem and consideration that the Company of St. Ursula, Secular Institute of St. Angela Merici enjoys in their countries, in their local Churches.



Here we publish their testimonies.

### **Toward the Jubilee: All Brothers and Sisters without Labels...**

It was an experience like no other.

It was process-driven. There were no action plans developed; and yet we were given a mandate as we returned to our countries. And the whole experience was grace-filled!

So what was this gathering about? The preparation prior to arriving in Rome was a reflection on the theme of reconciliation with respect to our own country. Then, before leaving our country, we were further invited to reflect on 2 Cor.5:16-20 holding this “as resonance” throughout our days in Rome. These verses led back to the theme of reconciliation and gave us a mandate: *So we are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.*

The initial sessions of the convocation focused on the themes of faith, charity and hope.

A significant link that the program made was that of peace with hope: our stated mandate as we returned to our countries was to be pilgrims of peace by living as hope-filled people.

Implied throughout was an appeal for consecrated men and women to keep the flame of love burning in our hearts: love for our Spouse and his Kingdom. Whatever the joys and sorrows that accompany our lives – personally, socially, politically, geographically and culturally – to be beacons of hope and so effect peace.

Intrinsic to the program was the synodal process – listening deeply to each other and to the Spirit. Most of our formal sessions were group sharing. The questions were stated in broad terms allowing for a wide response – the Holy Spirit was not restricted by narrowly focused questions. Each session consisted of 5 rounds:

- A short period of silent reflection on the proposed question.
- Each person at the table group was then invited to share their response to the question.
- Another short period of reflection followed, after which we were invited to share *what “resonated”* in us as the other members spoke.
- Then another short period of silent reflection, after which, the group was to come up with a short statement. Ideally this statement was not just a synthesis of the first round of sharing, but rather a statement of the group **“resonance”**. There were very few groups who managed to give a single statement. The synthesis or summary process is so well developed in us.
- These “group statements” were then shared with the entire gathering. Brevity was key as we had about 26 tables with about 7 people at each table.

I’m sure it was intended that we take this process home to use in our gatherings as appropriate.

An embedded dynamic in these days was that we were all there as equals, as brothers and sisters. Our names carried no titles, no post-nominals, no name of our Institute. Name tags showed only first and last name and the name of our country. At my table there were 2 religious brothers, 2



religious sisters, 1 consecrated virgin, and 2 Secular Institute members. My table members came from Kenya, Uganda, Fiji, Poland, India, USA, and Australia. The sharing was rich, honest and deep. It opened us up to the reality of the different ways of living consecrated life. This was a significant learning for many of the consecrated religious men and women at the gathering. A seed was sown for more mutual understanding and future collaboration.

Much of our time was given to allowing the Spirit to speak more deeply to us on faith, hope and charity - sometimes by merely “passing time”. We passed time waiting for buses, waiting for Mass with the Pope on 2 February to begin. We passed time on a long pilgrimage on Day 3 to sites of faith that speak to our lives. At three of the five churches that we visited, a short testimony was given by a volunteer on the theme specified for that church:

1. **The Basilica of St. Praxedes** where the testimony reflected on the joy of “Here I am” and the witness that can go as far as martyrdom.
2. **The Basilica of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem** where we reflected on the cross not only as suffering, but also as a sign of hope and trust since Jesus, through the cross, redeemed us.
3. The testimony at the **Basilica of St Sebastian** was focused on perseverance in consecrated life – learning to inhabit and live the situations that life and its events present. This particular testimony touched me deeply and was personal. It was given by a Sri Lankan priest, not currently living in Sri Lanka. Part of his testimony recounted the last days of the war in 2009 when one priest was killed, and another went missing. My sister and I have done volunteer work in Sri Lanka for 20 years. It was the priest who went missing that initially assisted us with some necessary introductions. We knew his story. For the priest who gave the testimony, and for myself hearing his testimony, it was more than co-incidence that we were in the same group on this day. For reasons of security it is impossible to do justice to his full testimony.

Someone claimed that we walked 18,000 steps. All those steps paled into insignificance with the joy of Valeria and Paola awaiting us

on our return from pilgrimage and then joining us in our evening prayer.

Personally, these days anchored for me an ever-deepening knowing of the profound unity of cross and hope. Whatever, the pains, difficulties, challenges or suffering that accompany our living, we live them hope-filled.

But I cannot finish without adding that the joy of sharing this experience with Perpetua and Voahangy, and meeting with Valeria and Paola, was beyond measure. I still look for Perpetua's head rising above others and her deep quiet wisdom. And every moment I expect a tap on the shoulder with an encounter of Voahangy's infectious joy. Sharing this experience with them was itself worth the journey. *Insieme* – what a deep joy we share.



*Monica Vaughan, Australia*

## **Below the Statue of Saint Angela in the Basilica of Saint Peter in Rome, with Lighted Candles**

As I joined the Church in the conference in Rome this year of preparation for the Jubilee 2025, the year of grace and reconciliation, I thank God and our leadership team that made it possible for me.



It is not just by chance that 3 daughters of St Angela stood below the statue of St Angela in St Peter's Basilica in Rome on 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb 2024 with burning candles. St Angela is indeed sustaining her charism in each one of us where ever we are in the world. My sisters let us live the faith

as we deepen our relationship with God, through Jesus Christ our Lover. I felt blessed and a deep joy within, as I prayed in St Peter's Basilica.

Our participants were 3 out of the 300 attending the conference, from 3 different destinations of the world, Kenya, Madagascar and Australia. My experience was quite profound as I held a little lighted candle. I thought and remembered The Companions in the World that I was representing. The global group of consecrated men and women in St Peter's Basilica that day with Pope Francis prayed for the Church of Christ.

Thank you for being the light of Christ where ever you are in the World my dear sisters.

Your vocation as Ursulines and your witness is valid in the church of Christ. Let us continue to listen to the guidance of the power of the Holy Spirit as we witness and experience God's love within. I felt called to rekindle the love and radiate it to others, to be an innovative Gospel presence.

During the conference we had the workshop, prayed, celebrated mass with Pope Francis, made pilgrimage, listened to testimonies. The pick of our joy was to be joined by our president for mass in St Peter's and a meal together. It was a period full of grace. In the year of preparation we will commit ourselves to re-establish relationship with God, ourselves, with each other and with all of creation.

A year of reconciliation, conversation, penance, consequently solidarity, hope, justice and commitment to service of God in joy and peace to promote holiness of life.

I stayed for 4 more days with the Ursulines of the Roman Union after the Conference. I went back to St Peter's Basilica, on 7<sup>th</sup> Feb, I sat bellow the pillars where the statue of St Ursula is (I thank God for Mary-Cabrini, who gave me orientation 6yrs ago) I prayed that our patron St Ursula may intercede for us in our commitment to Christ,



renew our courage and leadership in our encounter in the current history of the Church, as we witness.

As we celebrate the Company's 489<sup>th</sup> anniversary, I pray and thank God for our current leadership team, Valeria Broll and her team as they facilitate continuity and sustainability of our charism with joy despite all the challenges in the current history of the Church.

*Perpetua Nyakundi, Kenya*

## **Believing in Hope, Growing in Charity, Walking with Faith: A Mandate to Witness...**

It was a great surprise for me to be chosen among the three pilgrims from Madagascar together with a Missionary Sister of the Immaculate Conception and a Brother of the Sacred Heart.

This pilgrimage of consecrated life was truly a special gift also because we found ourselves among three sisters from our world Company of our Institute of St. Angela Merici: Perpetua from Kenya, Monica from Australia and myself from Madagascar - I thank the Lord for this wonder.



**"Pilgrims of Hope on the Path of Peace"** was the key theme of this pilgrimage of consecrated life in preparation for the Jubilee of 2025. Representatives from more than 60 nations participated. Even before our arrival in Rome, the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life had prepared and invited us to grasp the desires for reconciliation and asked us to reflect together and be challenged by St. Paul's exhortation 2 Cor. 5:16-20.

In light of these biblical words, we endeavored to discern the signs of hope and wondered about the resources we have for reconciliation in our respective home nations.

The four-day pilgrimage had been prepared with an intensive program of meetings, reflections and sharing.

### **Believing in Hope: Listening - Reflection and Discernment**

Believing in Hope is not an automatic thing. It is necessary to enter into ourselves in order to understand better. Always starting from St. Paul's text, we experienced living the Synod. Listening to the Word of God is the foundation of our dialogue. Listening also requires knowing how to be silent internally (demand to know how to forget ourselves in order to listen to the other); listening that demands conversion in order to listen to ourselves and be able to understand what the Spirit is asking of us.

The synodal journey requires **DIALOGUE**, and in dialogue, listening to the Word and listening to each other are fundamental. Faith is expressed in works, so we must always act by seeking solidarity, brotherhood/sisterhood, always allowing ourselves to be challenged by reality. We are invited to always start from the values of sharing and listening to arrive at an experience of synodality, identifying the need for peace in the real situation of our nation and the thirst for reconciliation in the world.

We experience the beauty of feeling together with the Church; we are called by Pope Francis to believe in hope, "even when the sky is cloudy trusting that there is sunshine above..."

**Growing in Charity** was also one of the goals of our pilgrimage. Joys and labors, lights and shadows always accompany our personal, ecclesial, social and political lives ... but despite difficulties of all kinds, every consecrated person must always keep his lamp of hope lit.

We did group work experimenting with the synodal method: silence and personal reflection; what we feel deeply within us; the fruit of our reflection, the joys we feel; listening to each other; the joys we felt after listening to others; holding what we want to share to the whole Assembly.

It was very moving to be with the Pope to celebrate the Day of Consecrated Life on Feb. 2 in St. Peter's Basilica.

In his homily for the day, the Holy Father, recalling the figures of Simeon and Anna who waited with confidence in the temple for the coming of the Messiah," stressed the importance of *"Waiting for God" and thus to overcome "the sleep of the spirit" that ignores "waiting for the Lord"... "for the many things to be done" ; to beware of "neglecting the inner life and adapting to the style of the world," inviting us, like Simeon to "take in our arms" the Child Jesus, "the God of newness."*

**Walking with the power of faith:** It was a journey of discovery and sharing. The pilgrimage we made to the different holy places in Rome (St. Mary Major / St. Praxedes / Holy Cross - Holy Stairs /Catacomb of St. Sebastian / Quo Vadis) was not just a simple visit of the places, but a beautiful testimony of faith, a meditation and a commitment to become "pilgrims of hope" following the apostles and Christ.

We concluded this day of pilgrimage in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart with a celebration of the Eucharist for Peace, presided over by Cardinal João Braz de Aviz, who emphasized the importance for consecrated life of an authentic witness to the Gospel without allowing ourselves to be seduced by the mentality of the world.

But above all, the thing that filled me most with joy was to find President Valeria and Paola from Modena waiting for us in the Basilica to meet and pray with us...just like a mother happy to meet her daughters and sisters who have come from far away...

### **Witnessing to Hope: Our Mandate**

Our pilgrimage was an extraordinary event and a unique experience of joy, listening, sharing and hope.

The Mandate we received is to be bearers and sowers of Hope and Peace. We consecrated men and women, as pilgrims of Peace, are to be people full of hope. To be instruments of reconciliation for Humanity to celebrate the Jubilee of 2025 in our respective nations.

My pilgrimage then continued a little more through Italy: I learned about history and visited the state of San Marino; I went to Padua, Trent and Como. Everything gave me hope and peace: unity, solidarity, friendship, sisterhood, concord among us.



Thanks to Perpetua and Monica for their witness of joy and simplicity. A big thank you to our President Valeria and Paola Cameroni for making the pilgrimage to Rome to give us hope. Thank you to Fr. Raymond, all the sisters and all those who welcomed me with love.

*Voahangy, Madagascar*



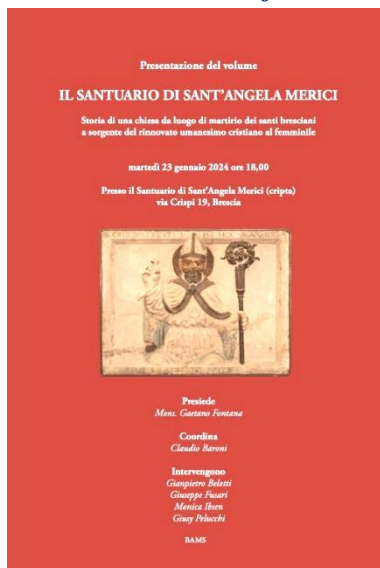
**A summary drawing presents the five attitudes most felt among consecrated people:**

**Giving thanks, being humble, asking for faith and love, being joyful, inspiring with one's witness, being presence.**

## Presentation of the Volume

### *The Sanctuary of Saint Angela Merici*

*History of a Church from a place of martyrdom of Brescian saints to the source of renewed Christian humanism for women*



The volume was produced by the Company of Brescia and presented on January 23, 2024, at the Sanctuary of Saint Angela Merici with the participation of several expert speakers.

By kind permission of the speaker, we gladly publish the talk by Giusy Pelucchi of the Brescia Company entitled:

*Angela Merici and the Company  
of Saint Ursula:*

*Living the Joy and Freedom of the  
Gospel*

"If we look for the reason why Angela Merici's charism has come to us as a still luminous and inspiring "*vita*

*nova*"<sup>1</sup> it is because its original formula – which *all depended on the pure counsel of the Holy Spirit*<sup>2</sup> – is simply based on the Gospel life, according to the style lived in the first Christian communities.

That is why it has been able to cross the centuries (almost five now) adapting to different customs and situations, while keeping intact the pulsating core of the Merician intuition. It has come to us through a long genealogy of women who – facing up in holiness to the challenges of history – have welcomed this gift of grace and shared its precious inheritance. They extended through history a special spiritual and human harmony with St. Angela who, *both living and dead*, is and remains the Mother of this Company, as she affirmed in the Third Counsel.

<sup>1</sup> Angela Merici, Ricordi, VII

<sup>2</sup> Gabriele Cozzano, Epistola confortatoria

A Mother who is determined to establish – through her writings – a living bond of love with each of her spiritual daughters, because she desires, indeed **wants** to prepare them *for ineffable union with Jesus*.<sup>3</sup>

For the central, pulsating core of the Merician charism, the living fire that passes from generation to generation is precisely this: to be called to live – in the world, immersed in the most varied matters related to everyday life – an intimate experience, *nuptial* union with Jesus. "*God has granted you grace to separate yourselves from the darkness of this miserable world and to unite yourselves together to serve his divine Majesty.... being thus chosen to be true and virginal spouses of the Son of God*" (Rule, Prologue). None of us deserved it; we only had the GRACE of discovering in our lives the presence of a God who took the first step precisely toward each one of us, made himself mysteriously present and did not rely on our meager human or spiritual virtues, but decided to look at us with love, involving us in a relationship that remains alive and constant in our lives and is made explicit as a *nuptial* dimension. It has no outward appearances. We carry it within us in the different realities in which we are and operate, where we weave bonds. It is nourished by the wellspring of the Gospel, the Eucharist, personal and liturgical prayer. It is a presence that accompanies the choices we make, which we read not only in the events of our concrete personal history but also in the broader history of our contemporary social and ecclesial context.

And Angela Merici remains the shining model to inspire our mode of presence in the Church and in the world. But is this charism really still understandable or livable today? Yes, if we take it up with the orientation to which Saint Angela educates us with her *writings* and with the witness of her life

Let us then try to grasp some of its traits

1. First of all, she was a ***spiritual woman***, in the proper sense, that is, she allowed herself to be guided by the action of the Holy Spirit in the concrete things she did, in the events and people she encountered. Starting therefore from REALITY, she knew how to grasp the movements and desires of the Spirit, and she adhered to them.

---

<sup>3</sup>Divo Barsotti, *La spiritualità di Sant'Angela Merici*

Everything depended on the *pure counsel of the Holy Spirit*, Gabriele Cozzano would write.

Angela's was certainly a gift of grace, but it was also the fruit of daily discernment done with the Gospel in hand, and the fruit of continual spiritual practice. Think of Chapter VIII of the Rule on obedience, where it says that one must "*above all, obey the counsels and inspirations which the Holy Spirit continually send into our hearts, whose voice we shall hear all the more clearly the more purified and cleansed our conscience....*"

2. Precisely because she was moved by the Holy Spirit, Angela Merici revealed herself to be a **dynamic woman**. Her



pilgrimages show us a tenacity and a will that was not afraid to embrace all possible means and ways to cling to divine grace in life. Even in Chapter V of the Rule, on prayer, we catch this dynamism, when she characterizes the prayer as crying out to heaven "*walking, standing, working and thinking.*"

3. Angela Merici is also an **unconventional and courageous woman**, that is, capable of going beyond cultural, social and religious clichés. Let us think of the very

foundation of the Company, which took place here in this place; she was aware that she was opening a difficult, daring road, which is why she waited a sufficiently long time to understand the authenticity of the intuition she had in her youth with the mystical vision of the ladder. After her death people would reproach her openly for this audacity with harsh expressions that have come down to us through Gabriele Cozzano "*what did she [=Angela] think she was doing? To imitate also a Saint Benedict, a Saint Clare, a Saint Francis. 'In fact, she wanted to be from more and, trusting herself to leave virgins in the midst of the world, she thought of something that none of the Patriarchs ever dared.'* Or, intolerable blasphemies against the Holy Spirit...." And who are those

who rebuke her? It is always Cozzano who reveals it: *friars, priests especially, and other wise people.*

But she certainly did not allow herself to be paralyzed by criticism, nor did she allow herself to be caged by the customs, moods or considerations that people might have of her.

In short, she was a **free woman**. Precisely because she was evangelically inspired. A spiritual author of our time argues that "*...to true freedom we are educated above all by reading the Gospel...we become free progressively, listening to this Word which is the portrait of the Son...the more we interact with it, the more we grow and define our basic identity. Our freedom is rooted in this journey of discovering and acquiring the Word of the Lord*"<sup>4</sup>.

4. She was a **"networked" woman**, that is, she cultivated **relationships**, and in the writings she left us she continually encourages us to live the style of togetherness. The Merician charism does not support a virtue lived in beautiful and peaceful solitude. It is a choral expression of togetherness and is expressed in the ability to work and make things work by creating *networks* of interaction, collaboration and friendship. In short: to gather a group and to enlarge a group more and more.

This Merician *togetherness* is also expressed in the mutual esteem and collaboration among the different *Ursuline* institutes, the Federated Companies, the Italian Merician Conference, the congregations that in different ways make Merician pedagogy their own, the Merician Center, the Friends of St. Angela: these are providential ties that help to expand horizons and understanding of the charism.

5. Angela Merici then encourages us to take **dialogue with the world** seriously. While she urges us to separate ourselves from the *darkness* of the world, she teaches us how to humbly put ourselves at its service, *to serve his Divine Majesty*. She did not live only in her little room. How many actions of her daily life tell us about the people she met, the most varied advice given; the ability to bring peace, the

---

<sup>4</sup> Silvano Fausti, LIBERI. Blessed are those who will believe without sacrificing their selves.

willingness to comfort even those who had political responsibilities, to tell us about how to settle disputes

The world is the place of our mission, the space in which to live concretely the intuition that St. Angela had with the mystical vision of the staircase, an admirable icon of the synthesis of heaven and earth, of contemplation and action.

What a beautiful synthesis Gabriele Cozzano has given us to tell the close link between contemplation and life, as he grasped it from Angela Merici's human experience and witness of faith! *And so being in the midst of the world and in active life, they taste of the contemplative life. And in an admirable way they live the one and the other as a unity. The height of contemplation does not take away from chores, nor do chores hinder the taste for heavenly things. Nor does heavenly light take away from works...* (Reply...Letters of the Secretary p. 107).

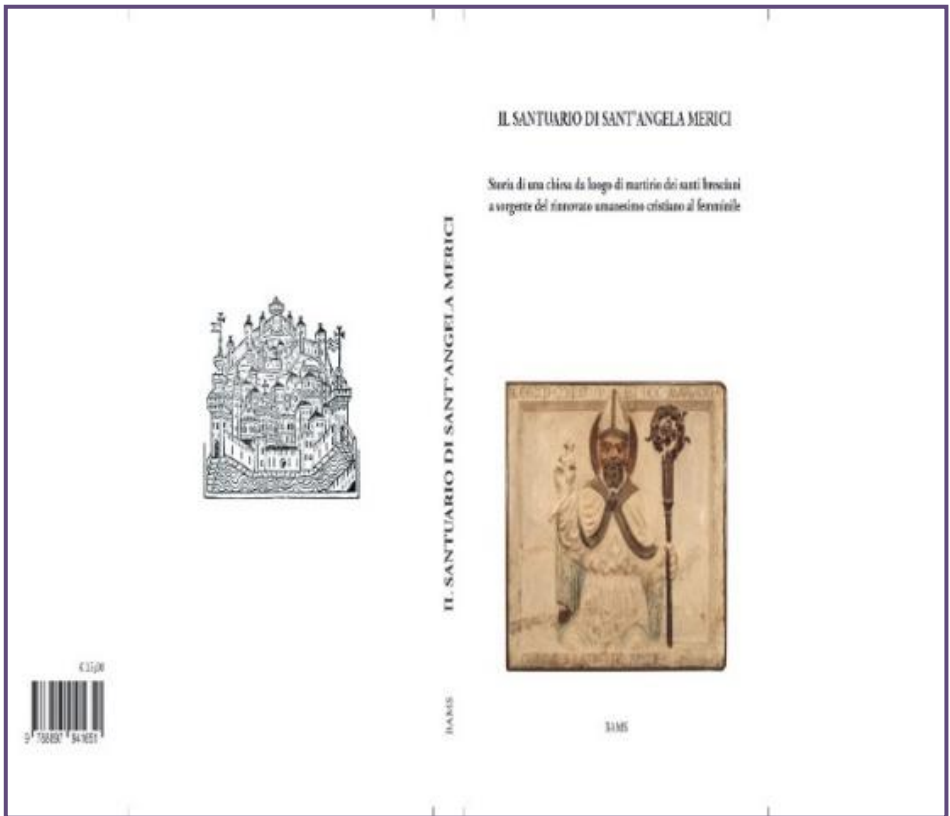
[The synthesis is something other than the sum; and it amazes me enormously that this insight was expressed so clearly almost five centuries ago, when we still struggle so much today to understand how the connection between faith and life should be characterized. Not the one overlapping or alongside the other, as two distinct realities: the synthesis is achieved in the interweaving and merging of one vital reality with the other, realizing a new reality.]

6. St. Angela's is also a **universal message**; it reaches not only her spiritual daughters. That has been clear from the beginning. While the Rule and the Company are intended for women called to live out their consecration to Christ in the world, the evangelism advocated by Angela is addressed to the whole community of believers, as is well expressed in the letter addressed *To the Reader*, which precedes one of the oldest texts of the Rule known to date, the *Trivulzian Codex*.



It seems to me, then, that there are good reasons to be encouraged to familiarize ourselves more with this very special, humble but great, Brescian Saint of ours, whose advice (which we find especially in the writings called *Counsels*) is still a compendium of extraordinary relevance in the pedagogical field, and whose robust spirituality fully responds to the vision of church that Pope Francis is delivering to us.

A Church “going out,” without too many labels, that knows how to dwell on the margins and the periphery and that seeks to live, in the concreteness of life, the demanding but joyful and liberating measures of the Gospel.”



## For the Year of Prayer...

### With Jesus in Prayer

#### *On the meaning of accompanying Jesus for an hour*

In her Rule St Angela recommends prayer as a source for obtaining the gift of a spiritual life: *By prayer one begs from God the grace of the spiritual life* (Rule, Ch. V, 4). Prayer is not only placed at the center of the life of consecrated women, but is also its most characteristic expression: *One must pray always with spirit and mind, given the constant need one has for God's help, as Truth says: "Oportet sempre orare" that is: it is necessary to pray always* (Rule, Ch. V, 5).



**Our meditation is about the one time when Jesus asked the disciples to accompany him in prayer.** It was the most important “hour” of his life, and for a special reason he wanted to share it with them. **It happens in Gethsemane at the beginning of his Passion.**

*Then they came to a place named Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” He took with him Peter, James, and John, and began to be troubled and distressed. Then he said to them, “My soul is sorrowful even to death. Remain here and keep watch.” He advanced a little and fell to the ground and prayed that if it were possible the hour might pass by him; he said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible to you. Take this cup away from me, but not what I will but what you will.” When he returned he found them asleep. He said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? **Could you not keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray** that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.” Withdrawing again, he prayed, saying the same thing. Then he returned once more and found them asleep, for they could not keep their eyes open and did not know what to answer him. He returned a third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough. The hour has come. Behold, the Son of Man is to be handed over to sinners. Get up, let us go. See, my betrayer is at hand” (Mark 14:32-42).*



**How many times have we made retreats?!** Can we remember a life-changing resolution after praying? We usually remember those moments only for putting forward a series of intentions on how to get spiritually healthy, but then none of us seem to do anything to get better. The truth is that none of us are today what we were a year ago: whether we want to admit it or not, we have grown to be either better or worse. It is undeniable that because we have life, we must grow.

However, if in our natural span growing up means getting older, in the spiritual realm growing up implies becoming younger, increasingly childlike. Jesus is plain on this point: **“Truly I tell you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven”** (Mark 18:3).

**We come to heaven young.** Spirituality is not evolution but devolution. A cradle is ready for each of us....

**A continuous hour of adoration** in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament is necessary to become children and discover God with the heart of children. The hour with Jesus changes us profoundly because it strips us of the patterns we have collected with age.

**But why spend an hour with Jesus?** Wouldn't 15 minutes be enough since we are so busy with all other stuff that almost overwhelm us? **Three reasons are sufficient.**

The **first, because we really need to experience extended time and continuity in prayer.** Today we are always busy and distracted. We waste time to make up time. The world envelops us in its logic. Being in the presence of the Lord is liberating. It makes us live the time of gratuitousness in which the first gain is to find ourselves. Paul says, **“For me to live is Christ!”** (Philippians 1:21).

Prayer is like the companionship shared by the Risen Lord with the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Only gradually did the Lord manifest himself to his disciples along the way (Luke 24:13-35).

What were the disciples doing on that road? They were talking, arguing, blaming each other. When avoiding the inner path, all that is left is talking, swerving, grieving. Like them, we prefer to go back to the past, to tried-and-true securities.

The Master approaches and asks what they were excitedly debating about. In their reply they show discomfort: **“Are you the only**

visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?” They tell him of their disappointments; after all, they were expecting another Christ: “We were hoping that he would be the one to free Israel....” They were expecting a political liberator.

But Jesus patiently leads them to the heart of the events of the Passion by arousing in them the awareness and ability to look with new and truthful eyes at what they had experienced. Facts are not what make us know Jesus but their inner meanings. ““Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures.” As he explains Scripture to them, he makes them see through these facts with the light of the Word of God.

**Prayer is discernment and discernment requires God’s own time.** Finally, their hearts having changed, now burning inside them, they ask him: “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over.” One hour alone had not been enough. And they finally recognize him in the breaking of the bread.

This is prayer. That is why we need at least an hour of prayer. He tells his story and simultaneously unveils us as well, freeing us from beliefs that could have created confusion, pain, disappointment, fear. Saying it bluntly frees us from everything that shields and hides true knowledge of Jesus.

But we ask ourselves: what is it about Jesus that these disciples didn’t know before, that they now have learned by just being with him, by listening to him, by being accompanied and taught by him?

In prayer they come to know Christ as “victim.” “It was necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and so enter into his glory.” Rather than considering his death a failure, caused by the hatred and the violence of the wicked, they come to know Christ as a willing victim of love. They recognize in him and through him the costly love of the Father, thus entering and becoming part of his mysterious project.

This is what the two disciples of Emmaus understood about Jesus. What is intriguing is how at the end of the hour of prayer, just like them, we too are reluctant to stop being with him.

The **second** reason: If in prayer we know Jesus as a “victim of love” – the decisive truth learned by the Emmaus disciples – **this intimate knowledge of him unites us with Christ in interceding for others.**

To pray with Christ is to pray for the world, to participate through prayer in his sacrifice of total self-giving to the Father for the world. **The cruellest thing we can tell any person is to pray when we in fact do not pray.**

In prayer we take on the needs of others and make them our own. We become with Christ a sacrificial victim of atonement for the salvation of the world. It is an authentic exchange, more or less like a blood transfusion.... Prayer is always saving!

**One hour a day with Christ to help those in need is the greatest act of true charity.**

The Lord lifts up and heals the paralytic lowered in his litter through the roof (Mark 2:1-12). Yet the paralytic never asked for healing.

Jesus forgave his sins and healed him because of the faith and prayer of his four bold friends.

Perhaps never before has the world become so inclined to the consideration of social problems and never before has it been so interested in their solution as today, yet strangely enough social awareness has been confused with and reduced to materiality, resulting in spirituality being thrown out. People have become *socially aware* but are neither spiritually nor personally supportive.



**Intercessory prayer** heals the inner structure of relations between us and the world. But it needs to be taken seriously.

The **third**, and much more important, reason comes from the fact that **it is the Lord himself who asks us to pray with him.** In Gethsemane: “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour?”

Three times he asks the disciples to pray with him and take on and share the burden of God's love and the causes of his suffering (Mark 14:32-42).

To burden himself with that love was to carry the load of guilt that would lead him, though innocent, to condemnation. In prayer Jesus identifies with everyone, especially with sinners.

**It is the prayer of surrender! "But not what I want, but what you want"** (Mark 14:36).

The term "hour" in John's gospel recurs seven times and each time it always points to the hour of combat, of the struggle against Satan, to the hour of the Cross.

In view of the Passion Jesus will say, **"Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? But for this I have come to this hour!"** (John 18:27).

And just before the Passion, Jesus exclaims, **"Father, the hour has come, glorify your Son, that the Son may glorify you"** (John 17:1).

**Prayer with Jesus is not devotion**, but sharing his very fate; it is living the same destiny as he; it is a form, the highest form, of love.

If one wants to run after success in the social order, then it is from the prayer of surrender that one must begin. Surrender to God and then begin each task.

This way of praying by standing with Jesus sharpens the eyesight, it purifies it. It makes us see Christ in every human being, even the worst.

If one wants to do work in the social order, prayer is the school of sociology, politics, solidarity, etc. It will train our ears to listen: **"Speak, for your servant is listening"** (1Samuel 3:10).

In prayer we must always carry the Scriptures with us. For the believer the Word of God is the source of light that will light up our needs and give us the exact words to witness Him:

**In you is the source of life, in your light we see light** (Ps 35:10).

We find in the words of the Psalm what St Angela had imparted in the Rule: **"By prayer one begs from God the grace of the spiritual life"** (Rule, Ch. V,4).

The hour with Jesus empowers us for life and mission.

*Fr Rino La Delfa*

*Notes for meditation given to the Company of Indonesia, April 12, 2024*

## FROM THE COMPANIES AND GROUPS

### Company of Toronto



The Company of St. Ursula of Toronto welcomed Marie Skwark on November 25, 2023 during a simple ceremony at Holy Rosary Church in Toronto.

Marie lives in Melfort, Saskatchewan in the western part of Canada. Bernice Daratha, also from western Canada, will accompany her as

formation guide during this initial journey.

Following the service, the members enjoyed a festive lunch and a fun time together!

### Company of Brazil Southeast



Here in Brazil we have two Companies, one in the Northeast and the other in the Southeast, given the almost continental size of our country.

Both Companies were started by Nicole Jeandot, a much-loved Angeline missionary from France.

Our southeastern Company covers a territory of about 1,600 km, beginning in Rio de Janeiro and reaching all the way to Rio Grande do Sul in the far south of Brazil.

We are 12 women consecrated for life, 10 in temporary consecration and 7 in initial formation. Since we are far away from each other, we divide into groups to do in-person formation every month.

We also created an online group with all of them, in which we specifically delved into the Constitutions using Caterina Dalmasso's "The Constitutions: A Path of Holiness" as a handout, as suggested by Maria Rocca. Nicole Jeandot had translated the text, preparing a beautiful booklet.

Many of us are elderly and can no longer participate in pastoral work or church movements. Older widows can go to church only with the help of their children; others stay home to pray and watch Catholic programs and Masses on television; still others take care of their grandchildren while their children are at work.

Many of the less elderly are ministers of the Eucharist and take communion to the sick.

One sister works in a shoe factory, coordinating the women's treadmill. Some also work on the team of CEB (Base Ecclesial Community), CEBI (Ecumenical Center for Biblical Studies) and Amor Exigente, a support group for people who have experienced painful losses. One sister supports the family and cares for the dependent sibling. One of the sisters deals more specifically with formation and accompanies a group of 17 candidates, 10 in temporary consecration and 7 in initial formation.

We are all very grateful to the Federation, which always helps us and increases our knowledge, both online, with the Institute's website and the very well-coordinated formation courses by Valeria Broll, Maria Rosa Razza and the Federation Council, and in writing, with the magazine "In the Same Charism" and other various books and aids.

We also receive advice and guidance from the dear and kindly Maria Rocca, who always encourages us in our commitment to the Institute.

Ultimately, we operate and are part of the world, giving example and witness as "true and virginal brides" of Jesus Christ.

*Luisa Monteiro*

### **From One End of Rio Grande do Sul to the Other – Brazil**

My name is Genesi Silveira de Ávila, I am 64 years old and live in Passo Fundo, in the far north of Rio Grande do Sul, about 282

kilometers from Novo Hamburgo and 293 from Porto Alegre, where the Company of St. Ursula put down its roots in Brazil.

I learned about the presence of the Angelinas in Brazil through the Internet. At the time I was looking for a secular institute that had the same spirituality as St. Angela Merici, whom I already knew. The Conference of Secular Institutes (CNISB) gave me the contact information for Ursula Schimitz, with whom I got in touch and then made arrangements to join the Company. During the probationary period required by the Company, I was accompanied at a distance by Ursula because of the miles between us and the difficulties due to my work in the health sector. Even today, this is the way I follow the continuing education course, in online mode, because the person in charge of my training lives in Rio de Janeiro, about 1,400 kilometers from Passo Fundo.



In addition to the Internet, the Federation website has helped me learn about the Company of St. Ursula and the life, charism and spirituality of St. Angela. I often visit the website to deepen my knowledge and formation as a consecrated woman. I share articles in Italian on my Facebook page and take advantage of the site's translator to translate what I find, to make St. Angela known to the people with whom I have relationships.

Today, as a consecrated Angelina, I carry out my apostolate in two parishes of the Archdiocese, in the areas of catechesis, liturgy, preaching of the Word, spiritual accompaniment, initial formation of seminarians, Marian ministry, and projects for the environment and vulnerable people. In the apartment building where I live with 96 other families, I try to be God's presence, to be open to everyone, to help in any way I can, listening and cultivating good relationships among neighbors.

*Genesi Silveira de Ávila*



## Company of Torino

January 20, 2024 – Carla Osella  
at a Meeting with Pope Francis

On the occasion of the meeting of the National Council of the Renewal of the Spirit, Carla Osella, who is a member of the Council itself, had the joy of greeting the Pope. Among the various sections of the Pope's address in that audience, we report an invitation that is good for all of us, prayer:



*"The charismatic movement by its very nature gives space and emphasis to prayer, especially prayer of praise, and this is very important. In a world dominated by the culture of having and efficiency, and also in a Church sometimes too preoccupied with organization, be careful about that! **We all need to make room for thanksgiving, praise and awe before God's grace.** I ask you, brothers and sisters, to continue to serve the Church in this, especially by **promoting the prayer of adoration.** A worship in which silence is predominant, in which the Word of God prevails over our words, in short, a worship in which he, the Lord, is truly at the center and not us."*



## A Sister in Bangladesh

It has been a long time since news of our only sister living in Bangladesh, JHUNU (Mary Ludvina Gonsalves), has appeared in this beautiful little newspaper of ours, and it is nice and important that we refresh our memory about her.



Indeed Jhunu is not "abandoned" by the Federation, which constantly maintains contact with her through writing and communications, always mediated by a PIME missionary father.

For many years Luciella Campi has faithfully maintained this important and valuable service, and now the commitment has passed to me. I seek to continue what Luciella has done with competence and dedication for a long time.

It was through the work of a PIME father, Fr. Arturo Speziale, that the charism of St. Angela came all the way to Bangladesh ... and it was he who began to gather around him some girls eager to consecrate themselves to the Lord.

Then there were personal ups and downs and changes among the Fathers who followed and accompanied the small nascent group: Fr. Francesco Rapacioli and Fr. Franco Cagnasso, (who being Missionaries ad Gentes are subject to moves and changes by their Institute).

Now our mediator /interlocutor is Father Gianpaolo Gualzetti. To



him I send my letters for Jhunu, and through him Jhunu tells of her life, studded with health problems and many other difficulties...

But her desire to continue to be a "Daughter of Saint Angela" and her commitment to live her consecration faithfully, in a context that does not favor her choice and despite loneliness and difficulties, is reiterated in every encounter.

Jhunu is a teacher in a "little school" that was opened and is still supported and subsidized financially by our Luciella and her Company of Crema.

This little primary school is managed by the PIME fathers and is located in a huge urban center (a city in the immense capital Dhaka!) of Mirpur parish, entrusted by the bishop to the PIME fathers. It provides is an opportunity for schooling for that segment of girls and boys (of all creeds and religions) who otherwise would have no means to attend other schools.

The last photos Fr. Gianpaolo sent me depict the girls and boys of the fifth grade, at the end of their schooling, together with Jhunu and the other teachers, the director of the school and Fathers Gianpaolo and Fr. Alan, a Brazilian missionary of PIME in Bangladesh.



At the time I am writing (March), schools in Bangladesh are closed for the summer vacation period (there will be excruciating heat!!!) and Jhunu, who underwent cataract surgery, is also back in her village of Soniapur.

She currently lives with her nephew Naisel, who is married, but his wife is in Canada. He pays all the rent for the room they live in and so with the school salary they are able to make a living. She is very close to this nephew and vice versa, because, when Naisel lost his mother as a child, Jhunu became his auntie-mother.

**Best wishes and prayers, dearest Jhunu!**

*Maria Rosa Razza*

## Modena: A Well for Life

The Company of Modena/Bologna sold the Casa Sant'Angela in Modena in 2020. As it was a valuable old house, the proceeds were such that some important donations could be made in the immediate future.



In addition, the properly invested capital has produced fruits that recently made it possible to bring help to Congo in Binza, where a clinic where 700 to 800 children a month are born, had had to close due to total lack of water.

Congolese Sister Adorers work in this clinic. A community of their congregation is based in

Modena, in the Parish of St. John Bosco, near Olga of the Company of Modena.

Talking with the superior Sister Camilla, Olga came to know about their reality in Congo; then one thing led to another and the fruit was the desire to donate to build a well that serves the clinic and also the entire village community. This aroused great joy in everyone: in those who receive and in those who give and made them experience a great sense of unity of being all "one" in God, of being God's family. I really don't know how else to describe it. The work started and they sent us photos from the beginning to their completion, and a letter of thanks. God knows, sees and shows us where He wants to provide.



*Luisa,  
Directress of the Company of Modena-Bologna*



## Here are a few extracts from the letter of the Sister Adorers:

... We knew nothing. After a Sunday Mass Olga, a consecrated woman from the Company of St. Ursula of Modena, approached Mother Camilla, asking, "**In your missions do you need a well? We would like to contribute to a construction because water is a primary, fundamental good.**" After

the necessary time to inquire, we learned immediately about the situation of the maternity hospital in Binza, where it was most urgent to plan the construction of a well to avoid the tragedy of closing for lack of water.

Immediately an expression of A. Manzoni leaped to the heart. In "The Betrothed" he puts on the lips of Renzo Tramaglino an expression of Manzoni's own faith, "**There is Providence here.**"

The project with its "cost estimate" was presented to the leaders of the Company of St. Ursula, who agree to bear this huge expense. We are infinitely grateful to the Lord and to these Sisters for their generosity that will have the Lord's reward for giving much more than a "glass of water," but a well of water that recalls the Living Water.



Work on the drilling began immediately, and **today with great joy we can see the water gushing from the well.**

What to say? Moved by the absolutely free gift on behalf of so many Congolese brothers/sisters and by the great encouragement to our community working at the maternity and dispensary in Binza, we can write "**Daughters of Saint Angela Merici - Company of Saint Ursula**" (of Modena and Bologna) in the list of benefactors whom we remember in the Eucharist, as we express to



*them esteem, affection and gratitude for such a great evangelical gesture. It is natural to recall that great will be their reward, for the Lord says, "Whoever has given even one cup of fresh water to one of these little ones because he is a disciple, verily I say unto you, shall not lose his reward" (Mt. 10:42).*

*And these consecrated sisters gave more than just a glass of fresh water, they gave a well, so valuable for the care and welcome of mothers with newborns, to the maternity hospital and to the sick people at the dispensary.*

*Sr. Cristina Roncari, Vicar General*

## **Ragusa: Transferring the Company's House ...**

### **➤ A Unique Gesture for the Diocesan Seminarians**



A simple, unique and generous gesture ... the Company of Ragusa meets the Rector of the Seminary and 14 seminarians of the diocese. The meeting has a twofold purpose, attention to the person and making the figure

of St. Angela known. In a joyful atmosphere around the cafeteria each of them receives a substantial sum intended for personal expenses, book purchase and tuition payment. The young men considered this gesture unique not because of the amount received, but because of the care for the person. The rector of the Seminary also expressed gratitude.



### **➤ Donation to the Christian Volunteer Association VO.CRI**

In 1992, by the work of the Secular Institute of St. Ursula Daughters of St. Angela Merici, the St. Angela Merici First Welcome Home was

born in the Diocese, in a property of the Company.



Since 1993 these premises have been granted on free loan to Vo.cri, an association supported with tenacity and love by Concetta Scribano, a daughter of St. Angela and former directress of the Company of Ragusa.



This year 2024, the Company donated directly to the VO.CRI the entire ground floor of the accommodation, over 200 square meters, with the commitment to continue the work begun in the Merician spirit to be a place of charity and love for the neighbors of the area.

*Enza Iurato, directress, Company of Ragusa*

## Company of Indonesia

### First Consecration

We gathered for a few days of retreat of our national Company, thanks also to the help of Don Rino on the theme "With Jesus."

On April 15, 2024, we welcomed the first consecration of Paulina Atmaja (Pauline). This



celebration was held in Surabaya Cathedral because Pauline is very active in this parish. It was arranged very well in ritual, songs and participation.

After the celebration we met with the faithful of the





Cathedral to present our vocation.

After the retreat we then visited a sister who was unable to attend.

Finally we went on pilgrimage to Groto Maria in Puh Sarang, Kediri, East Java, to give thanks for everything.

*Lydia, Directress of the Company of Indonesia*

***United together, all of one heart and one will*** (Last Counsel)



***It's time for communal decisions,  
for small and big choices*** (Pope Francis).

**Brescia, April 26-27, 2024**

A stop  
at St. Angela's  
before the Federation  
Assembly...



***Together like this, meeting each other***

***as loving sisters, talking over spiritual matters, rejoicing together, and  
together encouraging one another... was no small help....***



**See you in Rome...**

***Persevere faithfully  
and joyfully... Every  
promise I make to you  
will be fulfilled for you  
beyond measure...***

***And you, in the  
meantime, do what has  
to be done.***

# *With Saint Angela on the Roads of Hope*

*Be happy  
and have firm faith and hope* (9th Counsel 26)



## **ORDINARY ASSEMBLY OF THE FEDERATION**

**Casa di Esercizi Spirituali Padri Passionisti  
Rome July 30 – August 4, 2024**

-----  
**For internal use**